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STEEL

THE INDESTRUCTIBLE MAN

STEEL

THE INDESTRUCTIBLE MAN

CRITICALLY INJURED WHILE PREVENTING AN ACT OF SABOTAGE, HANK HEYWOOD IS SURGICALLY RECONSTRUCTED BY HIS MENTOR, DR. GILBERT GILES, USING THE MIRACULOUS BIO-RETARDANT FORMULA TO MAKE HANK MORE THAN A MAN--A HERO FORGED IN FIRE AND FURY--

FROM HANK HEYWOOD'S JOURNAL JANUARY 1940: "A FOGGY BACK ROAD IN UPSTATE NEW YORK NEAR THE CANADIAN BORDER..."

"SECRETLY, I WAS HITCHING A RIDE ON THE ROOF OF A MEDICAL SUPPLY TRUCK CARRYING THE ONLY EXISTING SAMPLE OF THE BIO-RETARDANT FORMULA, A SAMPLE I NEEDED DESPERATELY, NOT JUST TO HEAL MY OWN WOUNDS, BUT TO SAVE THE LIFE OF MY FRIEND, GILBERT GILES..."

"SUDDENLY A SHAMBLING CREATURE ATTACKED US FROM THE FOG, KILLING THE TRUCK DRIVER BEFORE I HAD A CHANCE TO REACT...

"WEAK FROM MY OWN INJURIES, I STARED IN HORROR, AS HE YANKED DOCTOR OLIVIA BROWN FROM THE TRUCK CAB, AND THEN AT LAST--I MOVED--"

EEEEEEEEEE

YARRR!

"--WHILE THE MONSTER SNARLED LIKE A DEMON OUT OF HELL!"

GERRY CONWAY WRITER, CREATOR ✱ DON HECK PENCILLER DESIGNER

FRANK CHIARAMONTE INKER ✱ KARIN LETTERER JERRY SERPE COLORIST ✱ ALLEN MILGROM EDITOR

A SCREAM IN THE NIGHT!

J-5716

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A MrBC Scan!

"OLIVIA GAPED AS IF SHE WERE SOMEONE SEEING A LIVING NIGHTMARE..."

"AS HANK HEYWOOD I'D KNOWN HER DURING MY COLLEGE DAYS AT PRINCETON BUT I DOUBT SHE RECOGNIZED ME IN COSTUME AS THE MAN NAMED STEEL..."

KARR

KTUD!

KTHOOM

"POOR OLIVIA: SHE WAS OBSESSED WITH THE RATIONAL, WITH THE SCIENTIFIC METHOD, AND NOW, VIOLENTLY, SHE WAS CONFRONTED WITH THE BIZARRE AND INEXPLICABLE..."

"I DON'T KNOW WHY THAT CREATURE HAD ATTACKED US, OR WHY HE WANTED OLIVIA, BUT ONE THING WAS CERTAIN--"

"--IF I DIDN'T BEAT THIS CREATURE FAST, HIS VERY EXISTENCE MIGHT DRIVE OLIVIA INSANE!"

ARRR

FOR GOD'S SAKE, DOCTOR, GET OUT OF HERE--

--WHILE THIS THING IS STILL DISTRACTED WITH ME!

"I COULDN'T LOOK TO SEE IF SHE HEARD ME!"

"JUST THEN I WAS TOO BUSY TRYING TO STAY ALIVE!"

ARRRR

WHAM

"THAT GORILLA HAD A GRIP LIKE A POLITICIAN AT A VOTE RALLY--"

"AND EVEN WITH MY MICRO-MOTORS GIVING ME SUPER-STRENGTH, I WAS STILL TOO WEAK FROM LAST NIGHT'S EXPLOSION* TO BREAK FREE!"

"AS FOR OLIVIA --SHE DIDN'T MOVE! IT WAS ALL HAPPENING TOO QUICKLY FOR HER..."

"SHE WAS PARALYZED WITH SHOCK AND FEAR..."

* WHILE FIGHTING THE "GADGETEER" LAST ISSUE: MORE LATER.--AL.

"...AND IT WAS JUST TOO BAD I COULDN'T SAY THE SAME FOR THE GORILLA WITH THE CAST-IRON GRIP!"

ARRRR

RRR

RR

"I DIDN'T KNOW WHERE HE CAME FROM OR WHY HE JUMPED US, BUT ONE THING WAS CERTAIN: HE WAS ANGRY, AND HE HAD THE STRENGTH OF A SMALL ARMY..."

"THERE WAS NOTHING I COULD DO BUT BRACE MYSELF--"

"--AND THEN I HIT--"

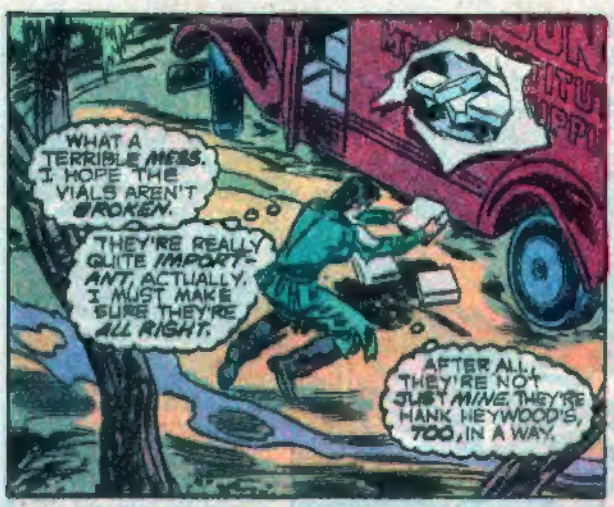
KWHOMP

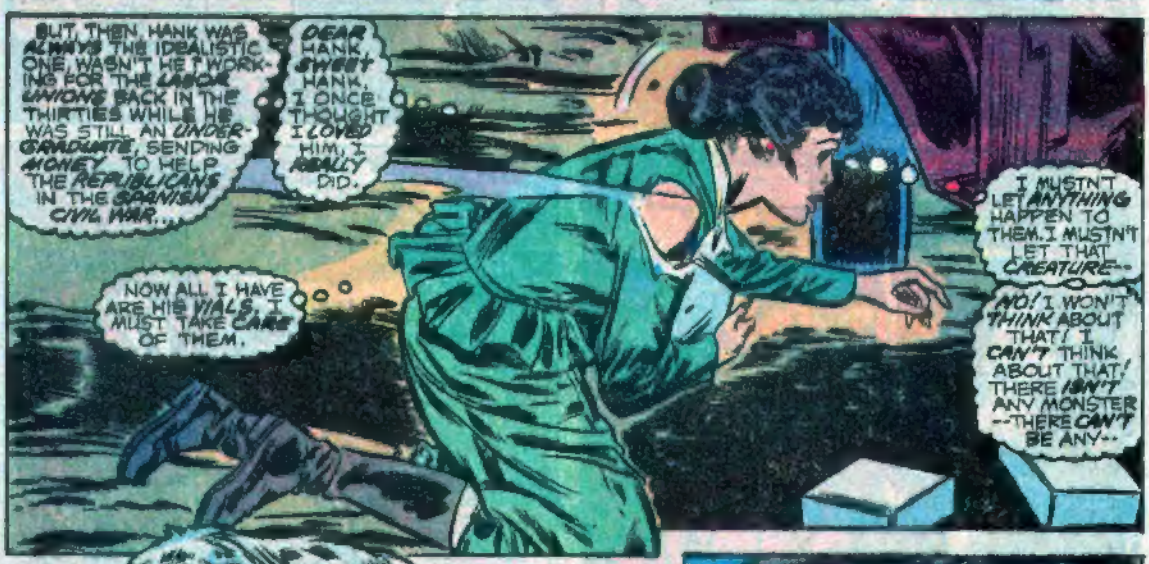
ARRRR!

"--AND THE LIGHTS WENT OUT LIKE CANDLES IN A HURRICANE."

"HE MUST HAVE THROWN ME INTO THE SWAMP! I REMEMBER AIR RUSHING PAST ME, FOLLOWED BY A MUSHY IMPACT..."

"AND THAT'S THE LAST THAT I REMEMBERED FOR A SMALL ETERNITY..."





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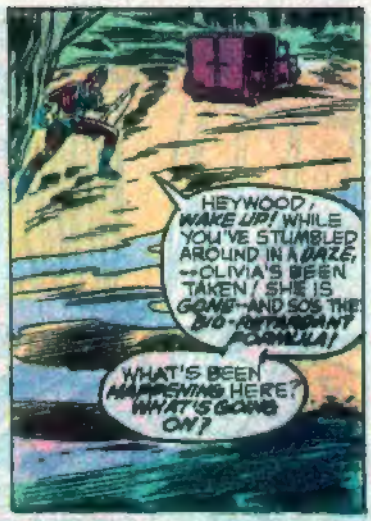
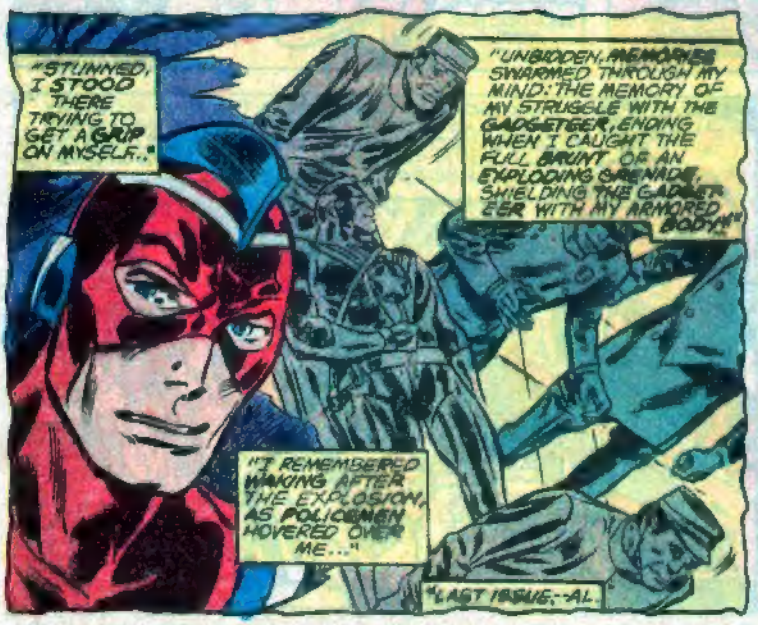
--OR IT WILL BEND AND RETREAT INTO DARKNESS.
IN A WORD: OLIVIA BROWN FAINTS... AND CAN YOU HONESTLY BLAME HER?
FOR A MOMENT, SHE LIES IN SHADOW, IN A SILENCE DISTURBED ONLY BY A STRANGE SENTORIOUS BREATHING...
THEN, AS GENTLY AS A BABE FROM A CRADLE, SHE IS LIFTED...
...AND NOW THE BREATHING IS SUBDUED, AS THOUGH THE DEATHLINE IS CALMED, SIMPLY BY TOUCHING HER...
SECONDS PASS IN TABLEAU, AS THE MONSTER PEERS DUMBLY AT THAT QUIET, PEACEFUL FACE...
AT LAST, ALMOST REGRETFULLY, THE MONSTER TURNS TOWARD THE MARSH FROM WHENCE HE CAME, AND WITH SLOW SHAMBLING STEPS VANISHES FROM VIEW...
ONLY ONCE DOES THE FOG PART, A STRAY SHAFT OF MOONLIGHT SHINING ON THE SHAMBLER'S SHAGGY SKIN...
AND ONLY THEN CAN THE MONSTER'S DESTINATION BE SEEN--WERE ANY THERE TO SEE IT--RISING FROM THE MISTS, LIKE A TOWER IN A DREAM...
A MOMENT LATER, THE FOG ROLLS IN ONCE MORE, THE MOONLIGHT DIES BEHIND A CLOUD, AND THE SCENE IS SWALLOWED BY SHADOW...
HANK HEYWOOD'S JOURNAL CONTINUED: "MY HEAD FELT AS THOUGH IT'D BEEN USED AS A BASEBALL BAT, AND THE WOUND IN MY CHEST ACHED WITH EVERY BEAT OF MY HEART..."
"NEITHER OF THOSE THINGS MATTERED MUCH, THOUGH."
"I'D ONLY JUST REGAINED CONSCIOUSNESS, AND ALREADY I COULD SEE THAT I HAD TROUBLE, AND LOTS OF IT..."
QUICKSAND! I'M SINKING FAST --AND I'M TOO FAR FROM THE SHORE TO PULL MYSELF FREE!
I DON'T HAVE A CHANCE-- UNLESS, THAT TREE LIMB--?

CONTINUED ON 2ND PAGE FOLLOWING

WHEW... JUST MADE IT...AND I'M EXHAUSTED!
HOW LONG HAS IT BEEN SINCE I HAD SOME SLEEP? TWENTY-FOUR HOURS? FORTY-EIGHT? MY GOD, I CAN'T REMEMBER...
EVER SINCE GILBERT GILES' HEART ATTACK, THE NIGHTS AND DAYS HAVE BEEN A BLUR.

AND NOW THIS--ATTACKED BY A MONSTROUS CREATURE ON A DESERTED BACK ROAD! IF I DIDN'T KNOW BETTER, I'D SUSPECT MY OWN SANITY!
BUT THERE'S THE TRUCK, WITH IT'S SIDE BASHED IN. AND THERE'S--
GOOD LORD, OLIVIA!


HEYWOOD, WAKE UP! WHILE YOU'VE STUMBLED AROUND IN A DAZE, --OLIVIA'S BEEN TAKEN! SHE IS GONE--AND SO'S THE BIO-ENTRANCANT FORMULA!
WHAT'S BEEN HAPPENING HERE? WHAT'S GOING ON?


"STUNNED, I STOOD THERE TRYING TO GET A GRIP ON MYSELF..."
"UNBIDDEN, MEMORIES SWARMED THROUGH MY MIND: THE MEMORY OF MY STRUGGLE WITH THE GADGETEER, ENDING WHEN I CAUGHT THE FULL BRUNT OF AN EXPLODING GRENADE, SHIELDING THE GADGETEER WITH MY ARMORED BODY!"
"IT REMEMBERED WAKING AFTER THE EXPLOSION, AS POLICEMEN HOVERED OVER ME..."
"LAST ISSUE,--AL

"ONE OF THEM SAID SOMETHING--"
TO THINK WE WANTED TO ARREST THIS GUY.
HE SAVED HALF THE PEOPLE IN THIS BUILDING BY TAKING THAT BLAST. HE'S A HERO; TOO BAD HE WON'T LIVE TO ENJOY IT...
"...AND THEN I PASSED OUT."

"I DIDN'T REMEMBER THE RIDE TO THE HOSPITAL..."

"--BUT I DID RECALL WAKING AGAIN IN THE EMERGENCY ROOM WHEN I FELT A HAND TRYING TO PEEL OFF MY MASK!"
LORD... HE WON'T LET ME TOUCH THAT COWL...

"I REMEMBER SEEING THE DOCTOR'S FACE GO WHITE WITH PAIN THEN HE BACKED AWAY AND I RELEASED HIM...!"
"SOMEONE SAID SOMETHING ABOUT PREPPING ME FOR AN EMERGENCY OPERATION, BUT THAT'S WHEN I BLACKED OUT FOR THE LAST TIME..."

"--AND THE NEXT THING I REMEMBERED WAS WAKING IN BED, WITH THE SAME DOCTOR BLINKING DOWN AT ME WHOSE VOICE I HEARD IN THE EMERGENCY ROOM..."
"HIS EYES WERE PITYING, AND HE SMILED THE SORT OF SMILE YOU RESERVE FOR THE DYING."

WHY SO GLUM, DOCTOR? I'M SURPRISED I LASTED THIS LONG.
HOW BAD AM I... AND HOW LONG DO I HAVE LEFT?
WELL, SIR, YOUR BODY HAS AMAZING RECUPERATIVE POWERS, AND, NATURALLY, THE PECULIAR... MODIFICATIONS TO YOUR SKELETAL STRUCTURE HELP CONSIDERABLY...
UNFORTUNATELY, YOUR INJURIES ARE SEVERE. THAT YOU'RE ALIVE NOW--IS A MIRACLE.
NO, DOCTOR. NOT A MIRACLE...

THOSE RECUPERATIVE POWERS ARE A BY-PRODUCT OF MY BIO-RETARDANT FORMULA, THE FORMULA WHICH MADE MY "SKELETAL MODIFICATIONS" A REALITY...
WITHOUT THE FORMULA, ANY KIND OF ORGAN TRANSPLANT--PARTICULARLY OF MECHANICAL PARTS--IS IMPOSSIBLE.

IF I HAD MORE OF THE FORMULA, MY BODY'S DEFENSE MECHANISMS COULD USE IT TO HEAL MY WOUNDS...
BUT THE ONLY EXISTING SUPPLY IS IN THE HANDS OF MY OLD COLLEGE CLASSMATE...OLIVIA STONE!
SHE WORKS IN A MEDICAL LAB UPSTATE AS A RESEARCHER...

I'VE GOT TO REACH HER, WHILE MY MICRO-MOTORS STILL GIVE ME STRENGTH TO MOVE!
GREAT SCOTT --WHAT ARE YOU DOING?
YOU'RE A VERY SICK MAN! GET BACK IN BED IMMEDIATELY!

WRONG, DOCTOR--
I'M A DEAD MAN, UNLESS I GET OUT OF HERE--PRONTO!
BUT THERE ARE TESTS I WANT TO RUN!
YOU'RE A MEDICAL MARVEL!
DOCTOR, YOU CAN TAKE YOUR TESTS AND-

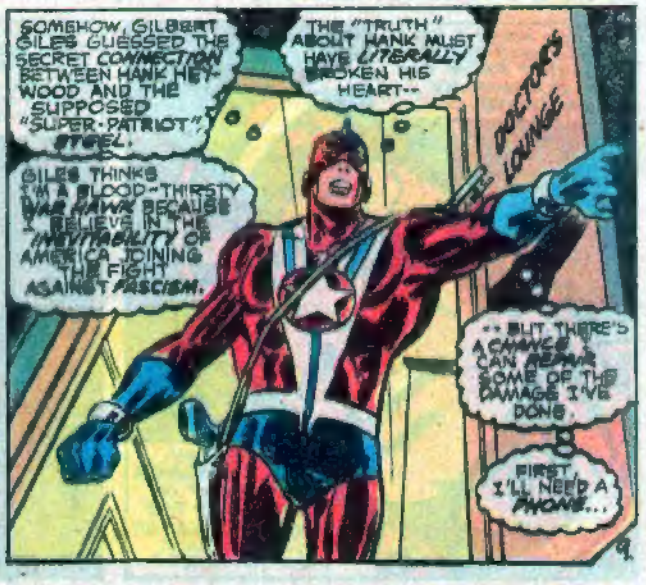
"I LEFT HIM GAPING BUT I DIDN'T GET FAR BEFORE A SOFT VOICE COMING FROM A ROOM ACROSS THE HALL STOPPED ME..."
"GLORIA'S VOICE..."
HE'S DYING, DOCTOR ...ISN'T HE?

YOU'VE ALWAYS WANTED ME TO BE HONEST WITH YOU, GLORIA.
EVEN AS A CHILD, YOU HAD TO KNOW THE ANSWERS. I ADMIRED YOUR CURIOSITY THEN... AND I ADMIRE YOUR STRENGTH NOW.
YES, HE'S DYING, GLORIA. YOUR FATHER'S HEART WAS ALMOST DESTROYED BY THAT LAST CARDIAC INFARCTION...
IF HE WERE YOUNGER, WITH GREATER RECUPERATIVE POWERS...

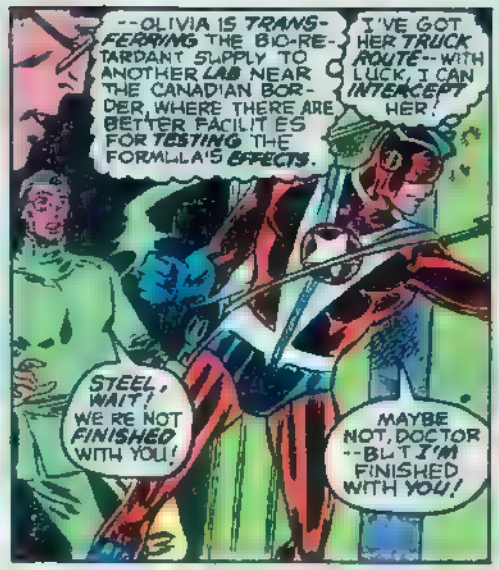
BUT THERE ARE SO MANY "IF'S", MY DEAR. IF MEDICINE WERE MORE ADVANCED...
IF SCIENCE HAD MORE ANSWERS...
IF DOCTORS COULD TRULY HEAL...
I... I'VE EXPECTED THIS SINCE MOTHER'S ACCIDENT. DAD USED TO BE SO ALIVE, BUT LATELY, SINCE HANK JOINED THE MARINES, HE SEEMED TO GROW OLD...

I THINK DAD THOUGHT OF HANK AS HIS SON, DOCTOR. IT MUST HAVE HURT HIM TERRIBLY WHEN HANK CHOSE THE WARRIORS OVER THE PEACEMAKERS.
I WISH HANK WERE HERE! MAYBE, IF HE TALKED TO DAD AND TOLD HIM HOW WRONG HE'D BEEN--
BUT HANK'S DISAPPEARED. HE'S AWOL FROM HIS MARINE BASE...

WHEN WE NEED HIM MOST, HE'S DESERTED US...
I WONDER IF HE EVER REALLY LOVED ME, AFTER ALL...
OH DARLING, IF YOU ONLY KNEW...
IT'S MY FAULT THAT YOUR FATHER HAD A HEART ATTACK...

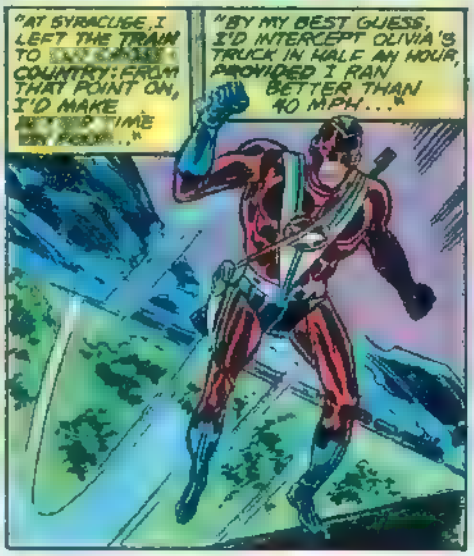

SOMEHOW, GILBERT GILES GUESSED THE SECRET CONNECTION BETWEEN HANK HEYWOOD AND THE SUPPOSED "SUPER-PATRIOT", STEEL.
GILES THINKS I'M A BLOOD-THIRSTY WAR HAWK BECAUSE I BELIEVE IN THE INEVITABILITY OF AMERICA JOINING THE FIGHT AGAINST FASCISM.
THE "TRUTH" ABOUT HANK MUST HAVE LITERALLY BROKEN HIS HEART--
DOCTOR'S LOUNGE
-- BUT THERE'S A CHANCE I CAN REPAIR SOME OF THE DAMAGE I'VE DONE.
FIRST, I'LL NEED A PHONE...

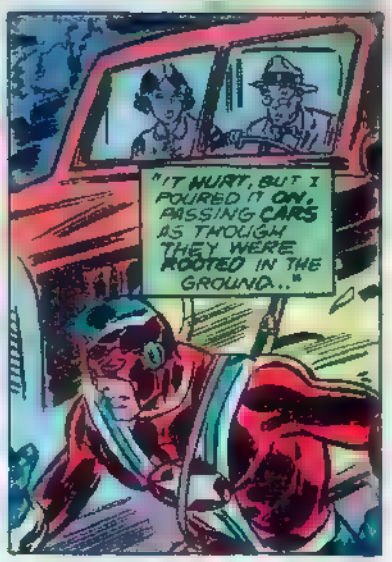
"BUT WHEN I CALLED OLIVIA'S LAB, I FOUND--"
SHE'S NOT THERE! ACCORDING TO HER SECRETARY--


--OLIVIA IS TRANSFERRING THE BIO-RETARDANT SUPPLY TO ANOTHER LAB NEAR THE CANADIAN BORDER, WHERE THERE ARE BETTER FACILITIES FOR TESTING THE FORMULA'S EFFECTS.
I'VE GOT HER TRUCK ROUTE--WITH LUCK, I CAN INTERCEPT HER!
STEEL, WAIT! WE'RE NOT FINISHED WITH YOU!
MAYBE NOT, DOCTOR--BUT I'M FINISHED WITH YOU!

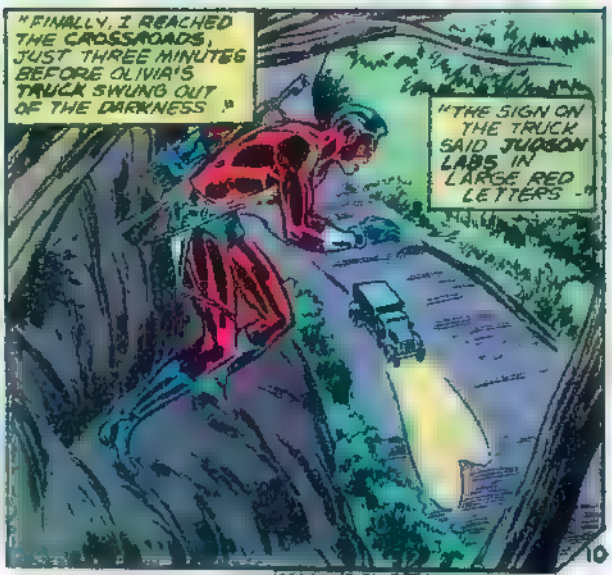
"A FAST, BUT PAINFUL, RUN ACROSS TOWN AND I REACHED THE PENN CENTRAL RAILROAD YARDS IN TIME TO CATCH THE 10:13 TRAIN FOR ALBANY..."
"EVERY MUSCLE ACHED AND MY CHEST BURNED--

"--BUT SOMEHOW, I HUNG ON, FIRED BY THE MEMORY OF GLORIA'S DESPAIR."


"AT SYRACUSE, I LEFT THE TRAIN TO [illegible] COUNTRY: FROM THAT POINT ON, I'D MAKE [illegible] TIME [illegible]..."
"BY MY BEST GUESS, I'D INTERCEPT OLIVIA'S TRUCK IN HALF AN HOUR, PROVIDED I RAN BETTER THAN 40 MPH..."


"IT HURT, BUT I POURED IT ON, PASSING CARS AS THOUGH THEY WERE ROOTED IN THE GROUND..."

"AT ONE POINT, I FELT SURE I WAS ABOUT TO PASS OUT FROM THE PAIN CLAWING MY BREASTBONE..."
"BUT EVERY TIME I WEAKENED, I THOUGHT OF GLORIA--AND THE STRENGTH BOILED UP INSIDE ME AGAIN, DRIVING ME ON."


"FINALLY, I REACHED THE CROSSROADS, JUST THREE MINUTES BEFORE OLIVIA'S TRUCK SWUNG OUT OF THE DARKNESS."
"THE SIGN ON THE TRUCK SAID JUDSON LABS IN LARGE RED LETTERS--"

"--AND THAT WAS ALL I NEEDED TO KNOW."

THUNK

THUMPK

DAVID, DID YOU HEAR SOMETHING JUST THEN?

IT SOUNDED LIKE SOMETHING HITTING THE TRUCK'S ROOF--!

LOTSA LONG TAKE LIMBS ON THIS ROAD, DOC.

PROBABLY A SQUIRREL WHO--RUN?

HEY DOC, DO YOU SEE WHAT I SEE? SOMEBODY UP AHEAD IN THE FOG--

--BIGGER N A BRICK BATHROOM!

DAVID, KEEP YOUR EYES ON THE ROAD!

AHEAD OF US--

SKREE

--WE'RE GOING TO CRASH!

HEY, DOC, WHERE'S YOUR CONFIDENCE? REMEMBER ME, OLE DAVEY BOY?

I USED TO HANDLE A RUM-TRUCK BACK DURING PROHIBITION

THE DAY I CAN'T KEEP ON THE ROAD IS THE DAY I RETIRE--

UH... HEY, DOC, [illegible] A NASAL CONDITION?

'CAUSE IF THAT SOUND WASN'T YOU, THEN WHAT--

GRRNK

OH, LORDIE!

"THE DRIVER NEVER HAD A CHANCE. BEFORE HE COULD EVEN TURN AROUND, THE MARSH MONSTER WAS ON TOP OF HIM, SWINGING A FIST LIKE A BUTCHER'S BLOCK..."

GRRNK

POW!

"AND THEN, AS THE DRIVER COLLAPSED LIKE A PILE OF LOOSE RAGS, THE CREATURE TURNED--RED EYES GLOWING, IN THE MIST, BREATH RUMBLING LIKE A FOG HORN!..."

GRRNK?

"OLIVIA SCREAMED AS THE THING GRABBED HER WRIST--"

"AND I LEAPED WITHOUT A SECOND THOUGHT."

"MEMORIES--BITTER AND PAINFUL, FULL OF REGRETS AND MOURNING DOUBTS...

"THEY FADED, LIKE DEW UNDER A RISING SUN, AND I FOUND MYSELF SQUATTING BY THE MAN WHOSE NAME I ONLY KNEW AS DAVID AND I GREW COLD WITH ICY RAGE..."

THAT CREATURE WAS WAITING FOR THIS TRUCK ...WAITING FOR OLIVIA.

IT WANTED HER FOR SOME REASON OF ITS OWN.

I'M GOING TO FIND OUT WHY!

"TRACKING WAS SIMPLE, ALMOST TOO SIMPLE: A TRAIL OF MUD-FILLED FOOTPRINTS ALONG THE BANKS OF THE MARSH, LEADING DEEP INTO THE FOGGY DARKNESS..."

"I FOLLOWED THE TRACKS FOR THE BETTER PART OF AN HOUR, IGNORING THE LANCES OF PAIN THAT CUT MY CHEST WITH EVERY OTHER STEP."

"BACK IN NEW YORK, GILBERT GILES WAS DYING... AND SO, IN A WAY, WAS I."

"MY MICRO-MOTORS WERE STILL GOING STRONG, AND THAT WAS ALL I CARED ABOUT: I WANTED TO KEEP MOVING, KEEP RUNNING FROM MY THOUGHTS..."

"BUT—THINK ABOUT THAT, AND YOU'LL GO CRAZY. SO I DIDN'T THINK. I RAN, AND AT LAST--"

"--I CAME TO A CLEARING--AND I FOUND THE HOUSE."

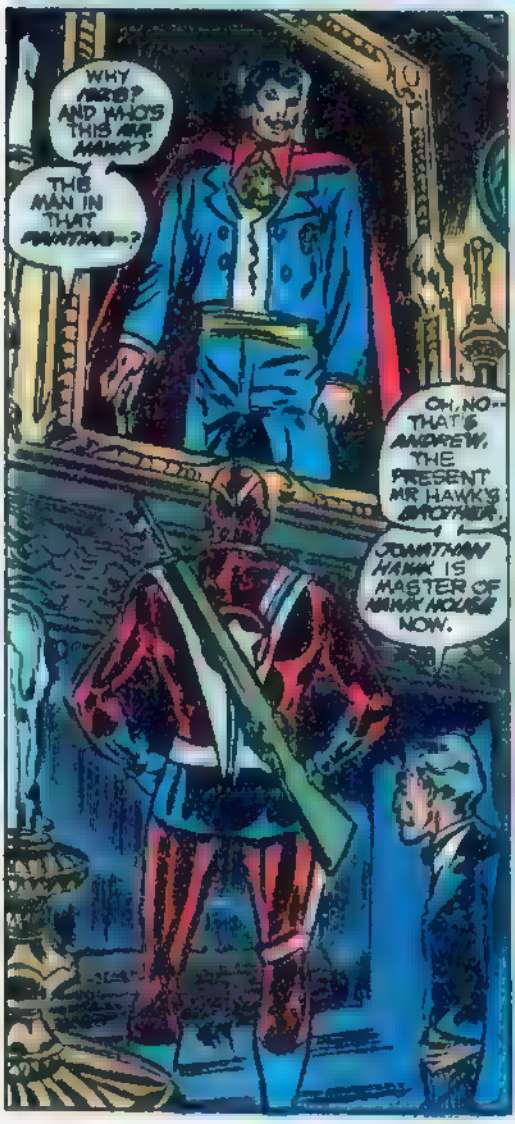
"THE TILE FLOOR INSIDE THE DOORWAY WAS DIRTY -- NO SIGN OF FOOTPRINTS, NO HINT THAT THE CREATURE HAD PASSED THIS WAY."

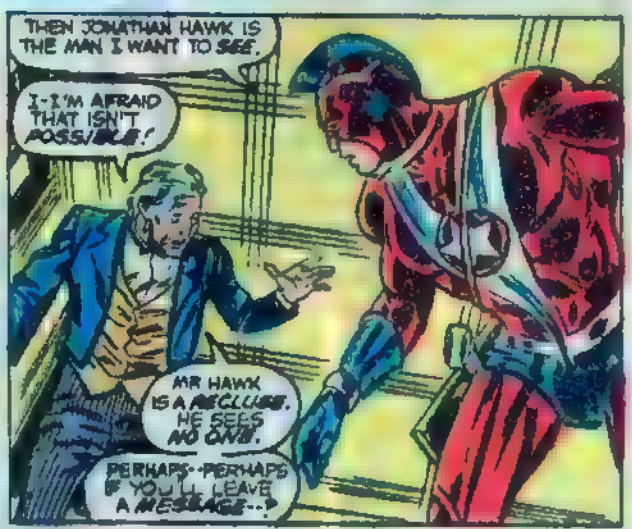
"BUT THERE WAS AN ODOR IN THE AIR, A MUSTINESS THAT SPOKE OF MORE THAN AGE AND DISREPAIR..."

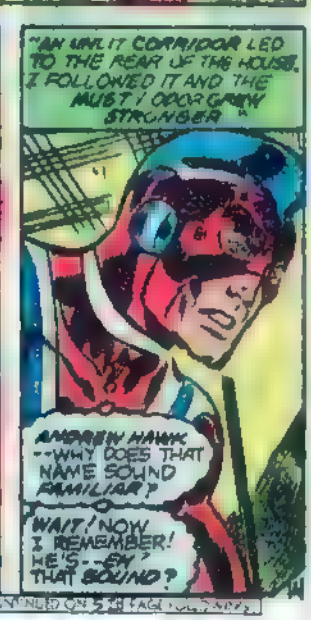
THAT MONSTER IS HERE, I'M POSITIVE..!

WE DON'T HAVE MANY VISITORS AT HAWK HOUSE THESE DAYS, AS YOU CAN IMAGINE. MR HAWK DISAPPROVES OF SOCIAL GATHERINGS..

THERE HASN'T BEEN A PARTY HERE SINCE 1928.







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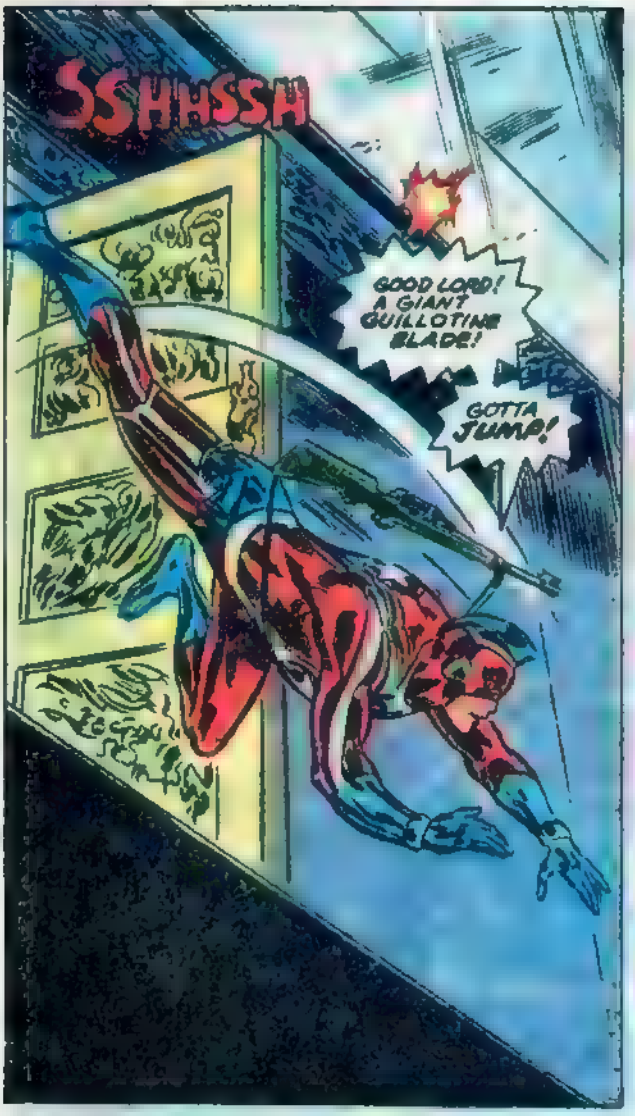
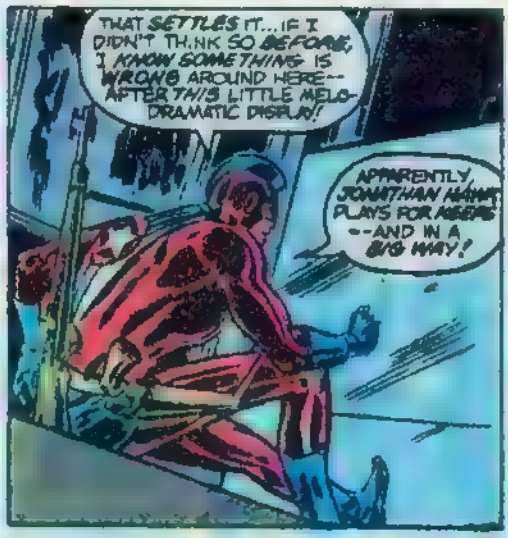
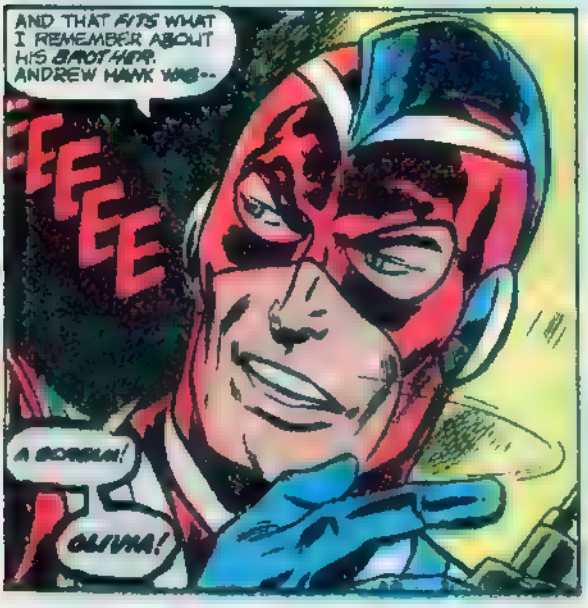
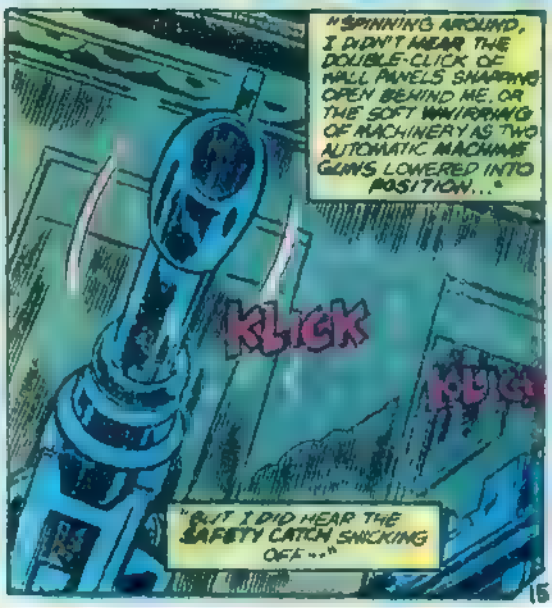
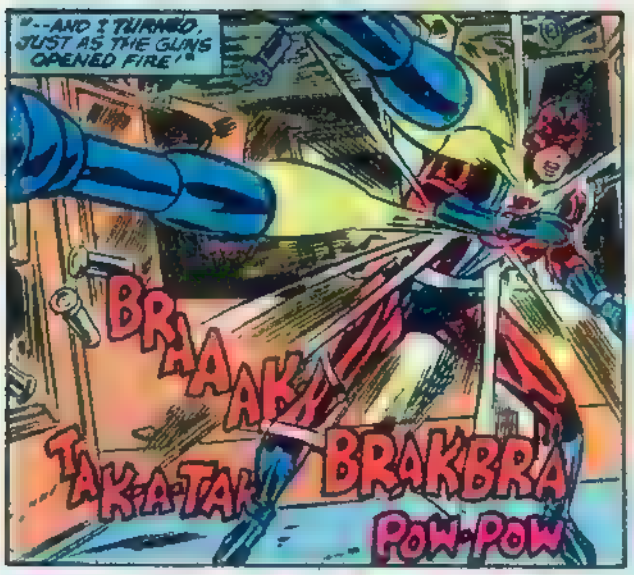

SSHHSSH
GOOD LORD! A GIANT GUILLOTINE BLADE!
GOTTA JUMP!

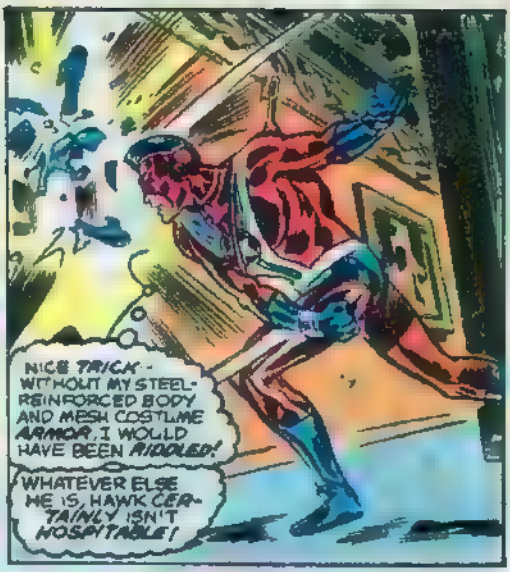
KCHUNG!

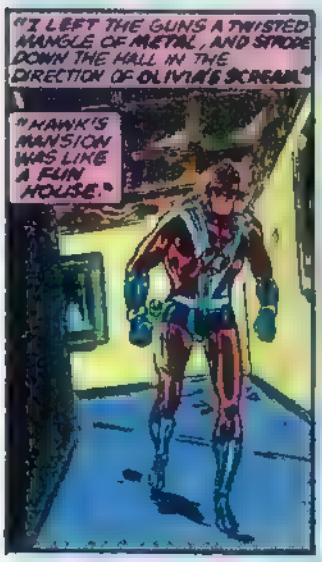

THAT SETTLES IT... IF I DIDN'T THINK SO BEFORE, I KNOW SOMETHING IS WRONG AROUND HERE-- AFTER THIS LITTLE MELO-DRAMATIC DISPLAY!
APPARENTLY, JONATHAN HAWK PLAYS FOR KEEPS --AND IN A BIG WAY!

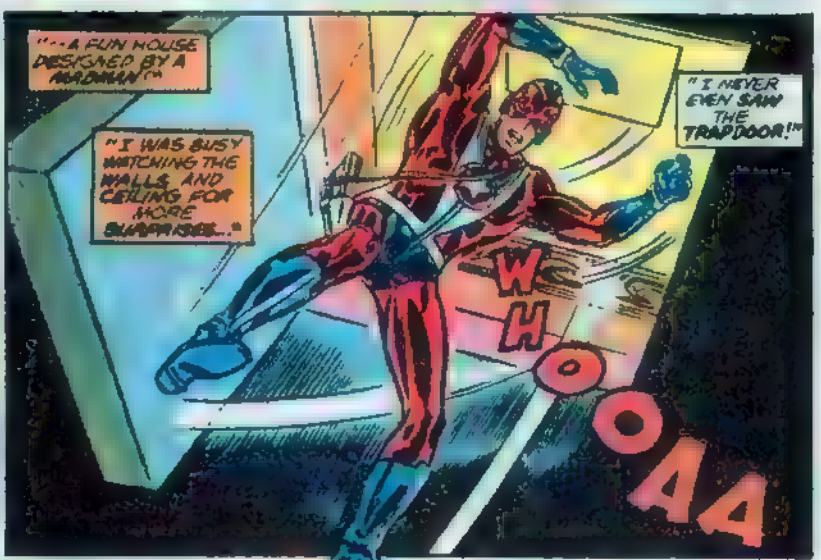

AND THAT PUTS WHAT I REMEMBER ABOUT HIS BROTHER, ANDREW HAWK WAS--
EEEEE
A GORILLA!
OLIVIA!


"SPINNING AROUND, I DIDN'T HEAR THE DOUBLE-CLICK OF WALL PANELS SNAPPING OPEN BEHIND ME, OR THE SOFT WHIRRING OF MACHINERY AS TWO AUTOMATIC MACHINE GUNS LOWERED INTO POSITION..."
KLICK
KLICK
"BUT I DID HEAR THE SAFETY CATCH SNICKING OFF..."

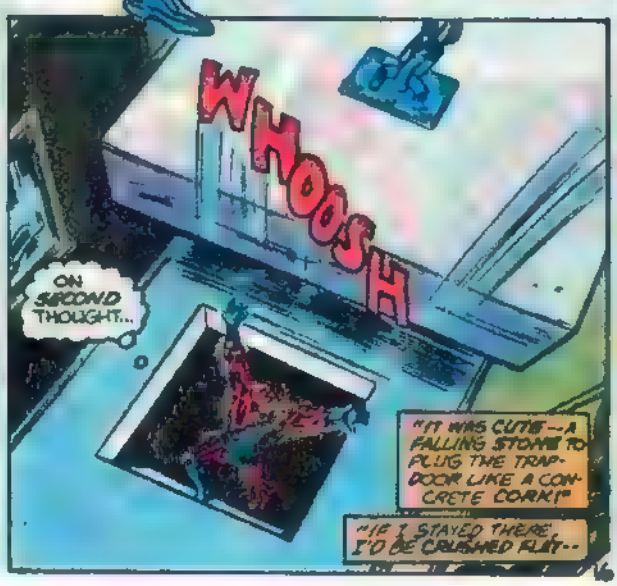

"--AND I TURNED, JUST AS THE GUNS OPENED FIRE!"
BRAAK
TAK-A-TAK
BRAKBRA
POW-POW

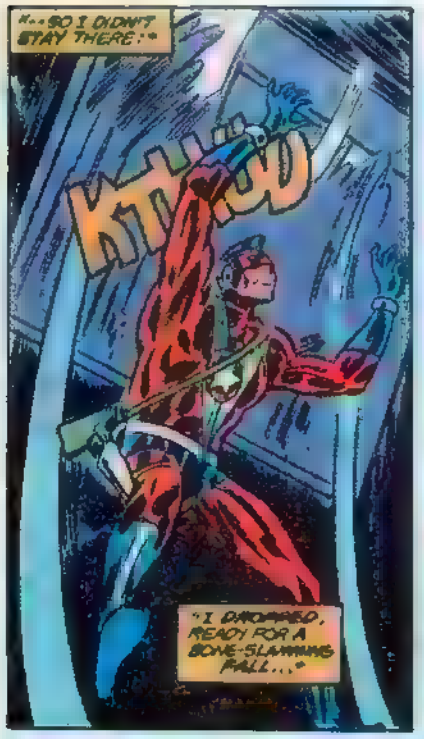

NICE TRICK - WITHOUT MY STEEL-REINFORCED BODY AND MESH COSTUME ARMOR, I WOULD HAVE BEEN RIDDLED!
WHATEVER ELSE HE IS, HAWK CERTAINLY ISN'T HOSPITABLE!

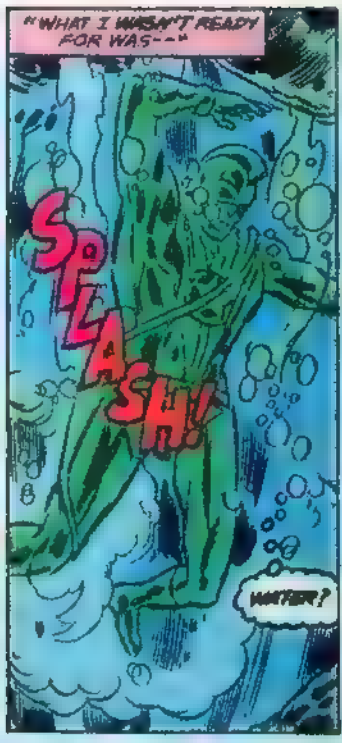

"I LEFT THE GUNS A TWISTED MANGLE OF METAL, AND STRODE DOWN THE HALL IN THE DIRECTION OF OLIVIA'S SCREAM."
"HAWK'S MANSION WAS LIKE A FUN HOUSE."

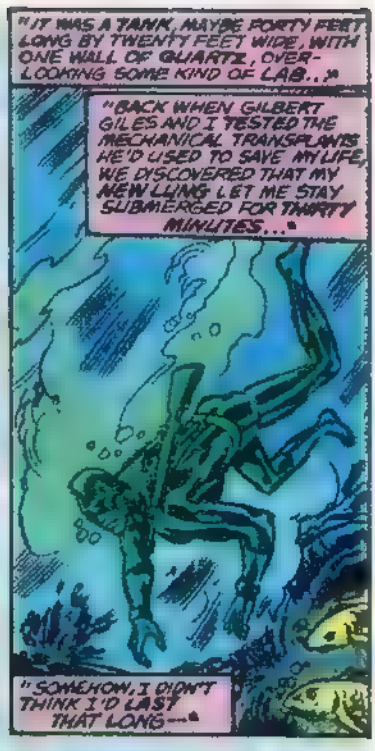

"--A FUN HOUSE DESIGNED BY A MADMAN!"
"I WAS BUSY WATCHING THE WALLS AND CEILING FOR MORE SURPRISES..."
"I NEVER EVEN SAW THE TRAPDOOR!"
WHOOAA

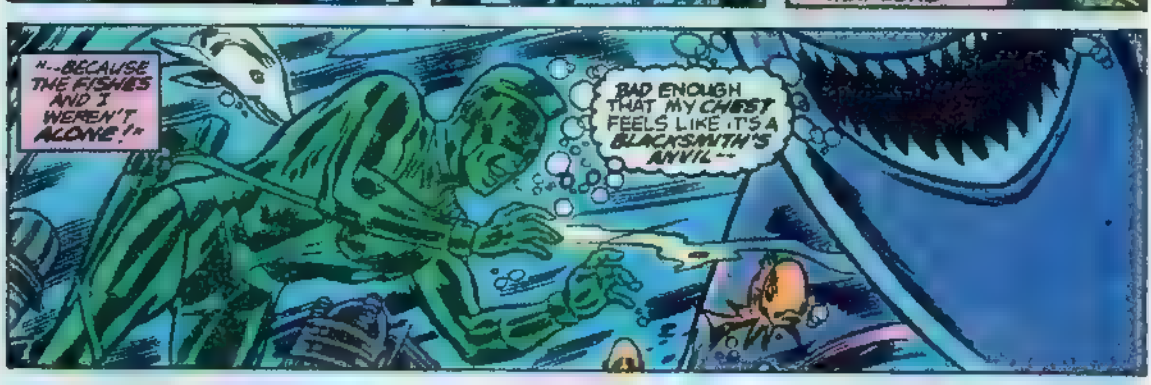
CLOSE --BUT NO CIGAR!
I GRABBED THE FLOOR-- NOW TO HAUL MYSELF UP!

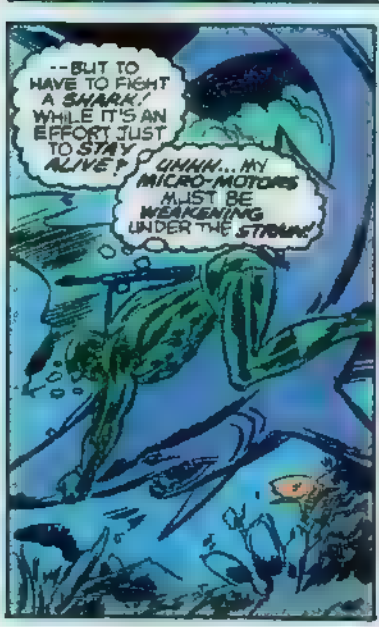

WHOOSH
ON SECOND THOUGHT...
"IT WAS CUTE--A FALLING STONE TO PLUG THE TRAPDOOR LIKE A CONCRETE CORK!"
"IF I STAYED THERE, I'D BE CRUSHED FLAT--"

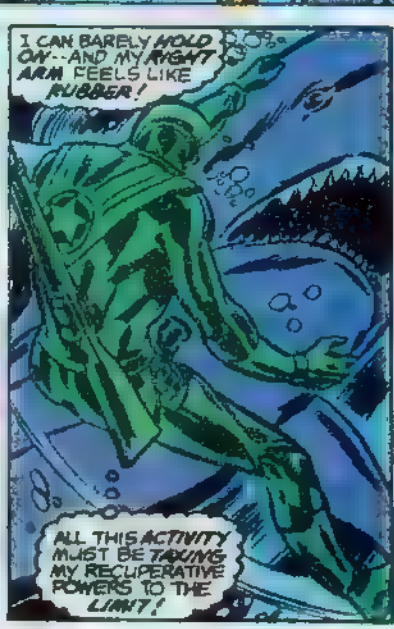

"...SO I DIDN'T STAY THERE!"
KTHUD
"I DROPPED, READY FOR A BONE-SLAMMING FALL..."

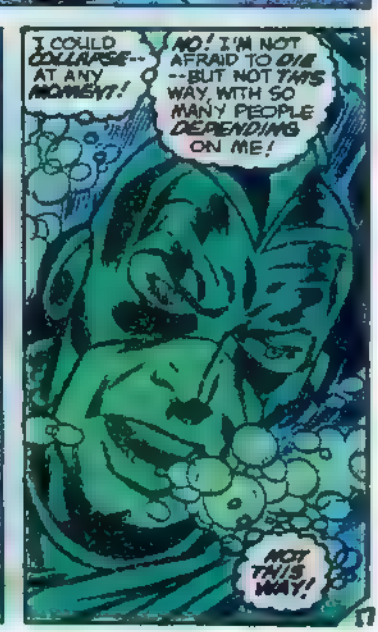

"WHAT I WASN'T READY FOR WAS--"
SPLASH!
WATER?


"IT WAS A TANK, MAYBE FORTY FEET LONG BY TWENTY FEET WIDE, WITH ONE WALL OF QUARTZ, OVERLOOKING SOME KIND OF LAB..."
"BACK WHEN GILBERT GILES AND I TESTED THE MECHANICAL TRANSPLANTS HE'D USED TO SAVE MY LIFE, WE DISCOVERED THAT MY NEW LUNG LET ME STAY SUBMERGED FOR THIRTY MINUTES..."
"SOMEHOW, I DIDN'T THINK I'D LAST THAT LONG--"


"--BECAUSE THE FISHES AND I WEREN'T ALONE!"
BAD ENOUGH THAT MY CHEST FEELS LIKE IT'S A BLACKSMITH'S ANVIL--


--BUT TO HAVE TO FIGHT A SHARK! WHILE IT'S AN EFFORT JUST TO STAY ALIVE?
UNHH... MY MICRO-MOTORS MUST BE WEAKENING UNDER THE STRAIN!


I CAN BARELY HOLD ON--AND MY RIGHT ARM FEELS LIKE RUBBER!
ALL THIS ACTIVITY MUST BE TAXING MY RECUPERATIVE POWERS TO THE LIMIT!


I COULD COLLAPSE--AT ANY MOMENT!
NO! I'M NOT AFRAID TO DIE --BUT NOT THIS WAY, WITH SO MANY PEOPLE DEPENDING ON ME!
NOT THIS WAY!

"BY THEN, I WASN'T EVEN THINKING ANYMORE."

"PAIN WRACKING ME I HEAVED--"

BATHOOM

"--AND A QUARTZ WALL BUILT TO WITHSTAND A STEADY PRESSURE--"

"--SHATTERED LIKE FINE CRYSTAL!

"I MUST HAVE BLACKED OUT BECAUSE THE NEXT THING I REMEMBER, I WAS SITTING IN HALF A FOOT OF WATER, MY HEAD POUNDING WITH EACH THROB OF MY LABORING HEART..."

MUST BE... AT THE END OF MY ROPE.

ANY MORE EXERTION LIKE THAT AND EVEN MY MACRO-MOTORS WON'T KEEP ME ALIVE!

"DIZZY AND WEAK, I STOOD ON LEGS THAT FELT AS BRITTLE AS THE BROKEN GLASS AROUND ME."

A LAB... WITH THE KIND OF EQUIPMENT I'VE ALWAYS THOUGHT ONLY EXISTED IN FLASH GORDON SERIALS...

WHAT IS JONATHAN HAWK DOING HERE?

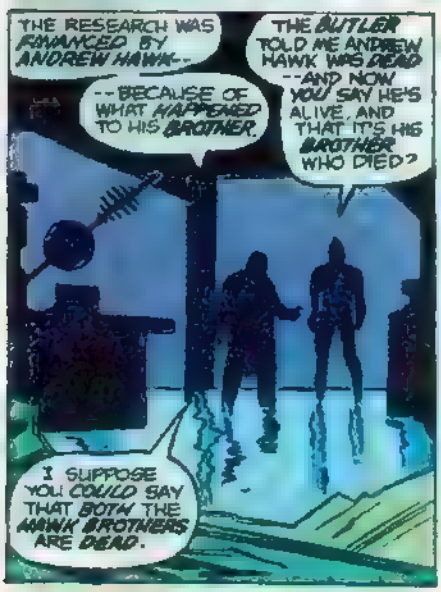
JONATHAN HAWK IS DEAD, MY FRIEND.

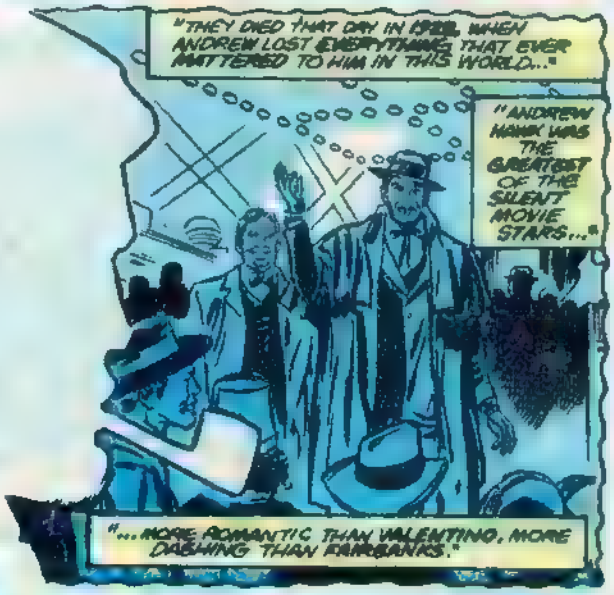
HE WAS KILLED-- IN A WAY BY HIS BROTHER.

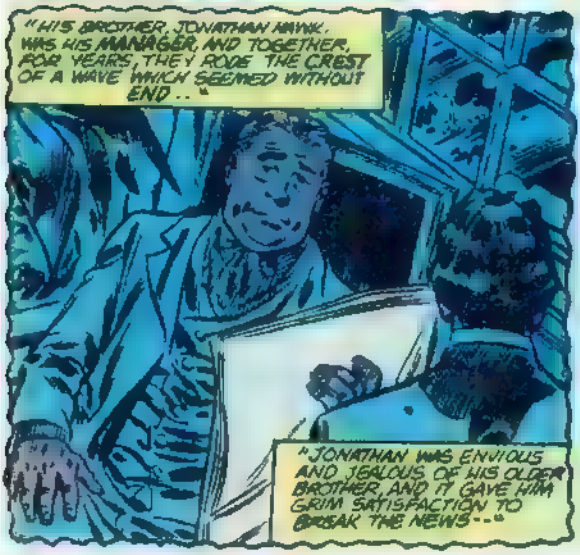
WHO--?

MY NAME IS GUNNERSON. I'M HEAD OF THE HAWK MEDICAL RESEARCH CENTER. YOU MAY HAVE SEEN OUR LAB COMPLEX BEHIND HAWK HOUSE.
THIS CHAMBER IS FOR EXPERIMENTS WITH FISH-- EXPERIMENTS OF AN--AH ...DELICATE NATURE.
SUCH AS? I HEARD A WOMAN'S SCREAM BEFORE, GUNNERSON.
IT CAME FROM DOWN HERE!

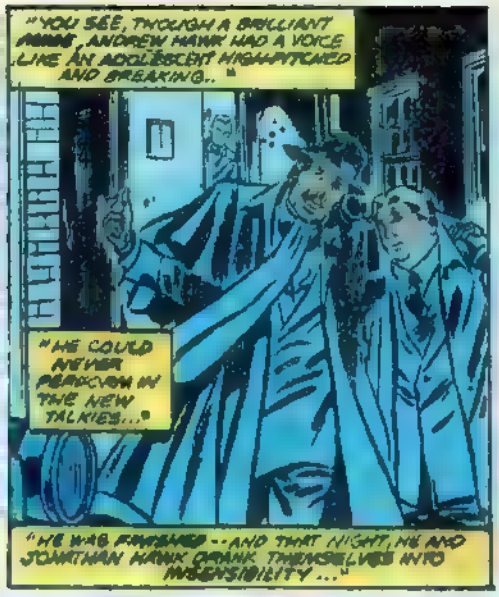
IMPOSSIBLE. AS YOU CAN SEE, THIS LAB IS DESERTED.
WE ARE REPUTABLE SCIENTISTS HERE, MY FRIEND, ENGAGED IN LEGITIMATE RESEARCH CONCERNING THE EFFECTS OF CERTAIN BIO-RETARDANTS ON THE HUMAN METABOLISM...


THE RESEARCH WAS FINANCED BY ANDREW HAWK--
--BECAUSE OF WHAT HAPPENED TO HIS BROTHER.
THE BUTLER TOLD ME ANDREW HAWK WAS DEAD --AND NOW YOU SAY HE'S ALIVE, AND THAT IT'S HIS BROTHER WHO DIED?
I SUPPOSE YOU COULD SAY THAT BOTH THE HAWK BROTHERS ARE DEAD.


"THEY DIED THAT DAY IN 1928, WHEN ANDREW LOST EVERYTHING THAT EVER MATTERED TO HIM IN THIS WORLD..."
"ANDREW HAWK WAS THE GREATEST OF THE SILENT MOVIE STARS..."
"...MORE ROMANTIC THAN VALENTINO, MORE DASHING THAN FAIRBANKS."


"HIS BROTHER, JONATHAN HAWK, WAS HIS MANAGER, AND TOGETHER, FOR YEARS, THEY RODE THE CREST OF A WAVE WHICH SEEMED WITHOUT END..."
"JONATHAN WAS ENVIOUS AND JEALOUS OF HIS OLDER BROTHER, AND IT GAVE HIM GRIM SATISFACTION TO BREAK THE NEWS--"

"--THE NEWS THAT WARNER BROTHERS HAD COMPLETED THE WORLD'S FIRST TALKING MOTION PICTURE--"
ARIETY
JAZZ SINGER FIRST TALKIE
AL JOLSON STARS
"--ENDING ANDREW HAWK'S CAREER AS SURELY AS THOUGH THEY'D SPLASHED ACID IN HIS FACE!"

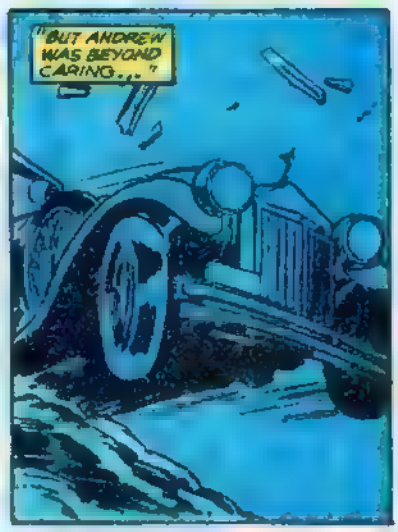

"YOU SEE, THOUGH A BRILLIANT MAN, ANDREW HAWK HAD A VOICE LIKE AN ADOLESCENT HIGHBRIDGED AND BREAKING.."
"HE COULD NEVER PERFORM IN THE NEW TALKIES..."
"HE WAS FINISHED--AND THAT NIGHT, HE AND JONATHAN HAWK DRANK THEMSELVES INTO INSENSIBILITY..."

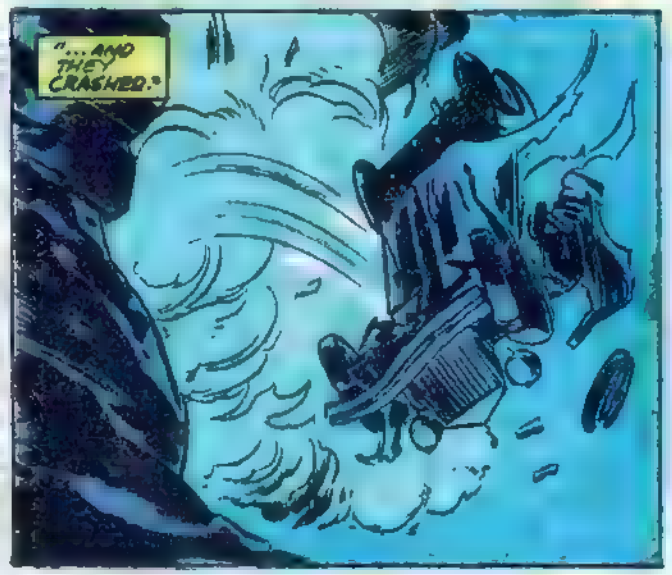
"JONATHAN HAWK DIDN'T WANT HIS BROTHER TO DRIVE THEIR CAR, THAT NIGHT--"
"...BEGGED HIM NOT TO--"

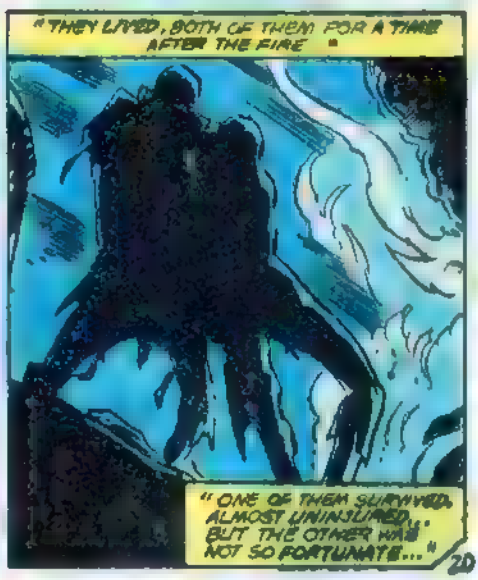
"--BUT ANDREW INSISTED, AND JONATHAN, HIMSELF TOO INTOXICATED AND WEAK-WILLED TO RESIST, ALLOWED IT."
"IT WAS A MOMENT OF WEAKNESS THAT WOULD DESTROY THEM BOTH..."

"SURELY YOU SAW THE ROAD LEADING TO HAWK HOUSE--TWISTING, TREACHEROUS--PARTICULARLY THE LAST CURVE ON THE HILL BEFORE THE MAELSTROM."

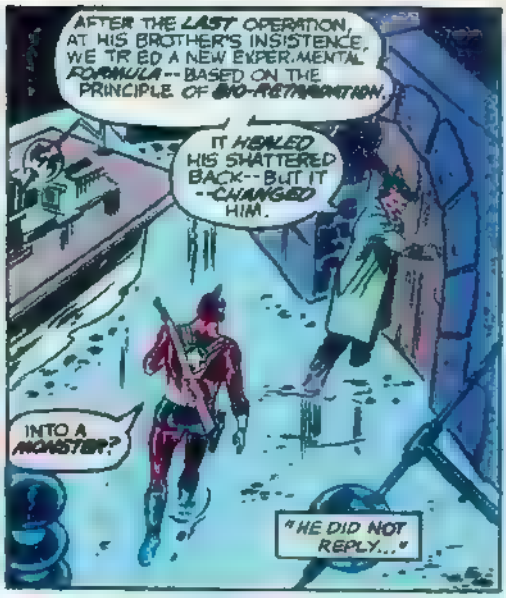
"JONATHAN SAW THE CURVE AN INSTANT BEFORE THEY HIT IT..."
"HE CRIED OUT TO WHAM HIS BROTHER ANDREW..."

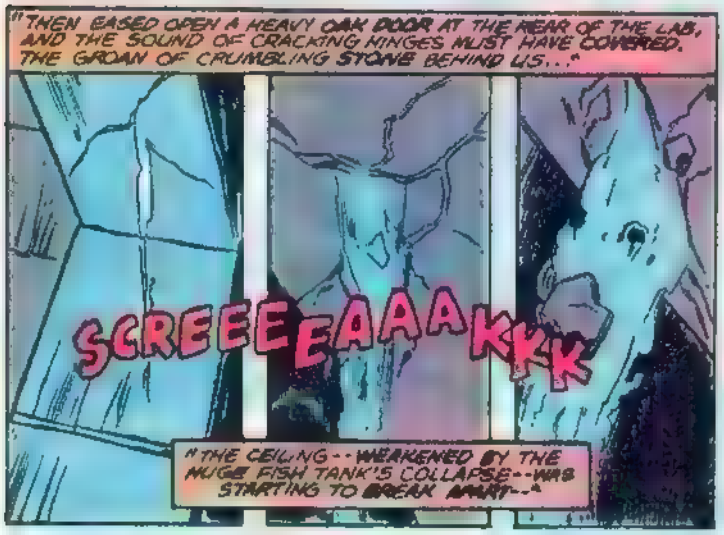

"BUT ANDREW WAS BEYOND CARING..."


"...AND THEY CRASHED."


"THEY LIVED, BOTH OF THEM FOR A TIME AFTER THE FIRE."
"ONE OF THEM SURVIVED, ALMOST UNINJURED, BUT THE OTHER WAS NOT SO FORTUNATE..."

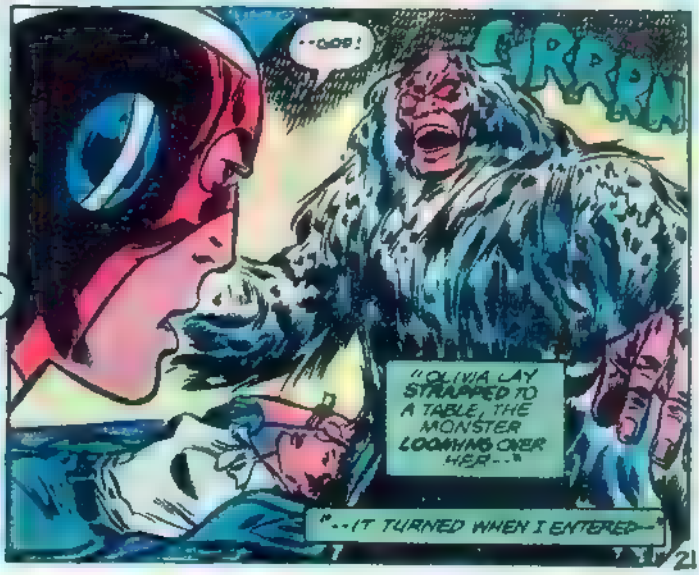
JONATHAN HAWK WAS HORRIBLY MANGLED BY THE CRASH--HIS BACK BROKEN, HIS FACE DESTROYED.
HE SUFFERED THROUGH FORTY OPERATIONS. BUT NOTHING HELPED. NOT ONLY WAS HIS BODY BROKEN, BUT SO WAS... HIS MIND.
SO WHERE IS HE NOW? WHAT HAPPENED TO HIM?
I TOLD YOU, JONATHAN HAWK IS DEAD...


AFTER THE LAST OPERATION, AT HIS BROTHER'S INSISTENCE, WE TRIED A NEW EXPERIMENTAL FORMULA--BASED ON THE PRINCIPLE OF BIO-REGENERATION.
IT HEALED HIS SHATTERED BACK--BUT IT--CHANGED HIM.
INTO A MONSTER?
"HE DID NOT REPLY..."


"THEN EASED OPEN A HEAVY OAK DOOR AT THE REAR OF THE LAB, AND THE SOUND OF CRACKING HINGES MUST HAVE COVERED, THE GROAN OF CRUMBLING STONE BEHIND US..."
SCREEEEAAAAKKK
"THE CEILING--WEAKENED BY THE HUGE FISH TANK'S COLLAPSE--WAS STARTING TO BREAK APART--"

"--BUT NEITHER GUNNERSON NOR I HEARD THE SLIGHTEST SOUND."
IF JONATHAN HAWK IS A MONSTER, THEN HIS BROTHER MADE HIM ONE.
WHICH IS THE TRUE MONSTER, THEN, --EH, MY FRIEND?

OLIVIA!
OH MY--


--GOD!
GRRRR
"OLIVIA LAY STRAPPED TO A TABLE, THE MONSTER LOOMING OVER HER--"
"--IT TURNED WHEN I ENTERED--"

"--AND THEN IT CHARGED!"

GRRNNK

SKRASH!

"I WAS TOO NEAR OLIVIA TO USE MY WEAPONS--"

"--AND WITH MY OWN INJURIES, I WAS TOO WEAK TO FIGHT HIM FOR LONG."

"I TRIED SLOWING HIM WITH A FACEFUL OF BROKEN MACHINERY--"

"--BUT HE JUST SLAPPED IT ASIDE, LIKE A CHILD SWATTING A FLY!"

KTOM!

"BACKING UP, I ALMOST STUMBLED INTO GUARDERON--HE WAS LAUGHING AND THERE WAS SOMETHING WRONG WITH HIS EYES--"

"--BUT I DIDN'T HAVE TIME TO WONDER ABOUT THE SCIENTIST, THOUGH I REMEMBERED WHAT HE'D SAID TO ME--"

"--ABOUT HAWK'S INJURIES--"

"--ABOUT HIS BROKEN BACK."

"IT WAS A CHANCE, MAYBE THE ONLY CHANCE I'D EVER GET..."

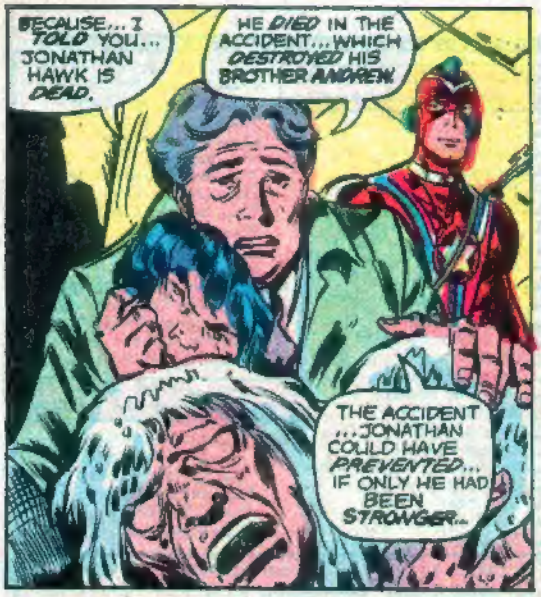
"ONE BLOW WAS ALL I HAD THE STRENGTH FOR--ONE BLOW BETWEEN OLIVIA AND DEATH!"

GRNNK

"ONE BLOW--RIGHT TO THE CREATURE'S NEWLY-HEALED SPINE!"
AAH
RGH
KRAK!

"THE MONSTER WENT DOWN LIKE A SHAGGY AVALANCHE."
"--AND 'GUNNERSON' WHIMPERED AS THOUGH THE MONSTER'S PAIN WERE HIS OWN."
NO... OH, NO...

ADMIT THE TRUTH, FRIEND. THAT ISN'T JONATHAN HAWK LYING THERE...
...IT'S ANDREW. YOUR BROTHER.
DOES IT MATTER NOW? I LOVED HIM... WEPT FOR HIM...
AT FIRST I FELT RESPONSIBLE FOR THE ACCIDENT THAT MAIMED HIM...
...THEN I WAS GLAD--GLAD FOR ONCE NOT TO BE LIVING IN THE SHADOW OF HIS FAME...
YOU EXPERIMENTED, ALL RIGHT--WITH FORMULAS YOU DIDN'T UNDERSTAND, TURNING YOUR OWN BROTHER INTO A MONSTROSITY.
YOU SENT HIM TO STEAL THE BIO-RETARDANT FROM THE LAB TRUCK, AFTER LEARNING IT'D PASS YOUR NOME...
I CAN UNDERSTAND THAT, I SUPPOSE --BUT WHY THE DISGUISES?
...THEN CAME THE GUILT! TERRIBLE, UNRELENTING; PUNISHING ME FOR HAVING FELT ANY JOY AT HIS MISFORTUNE!
I TRIED EVERYTHING TO SAVE HIM--HIRED SCIENTISTS, BUILT THIS LAB--EVEN EXPERIMENTED MYSELF--



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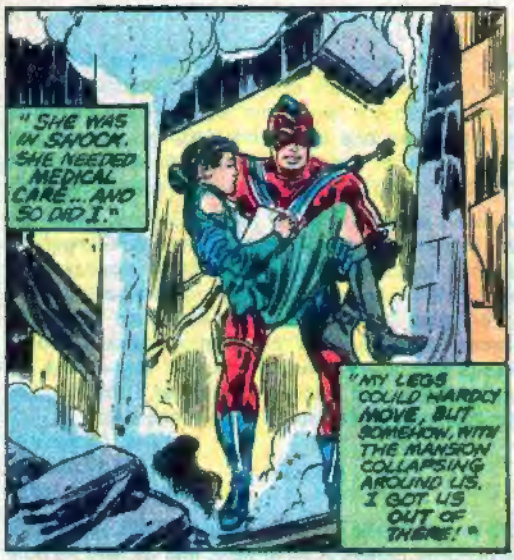


"MAYBE IT WAS JUST THE END ...OF A VERY BAD DREAM."

HE-HE DIDN'T EVEN TRY TO GET OUT!

DO YOU THINK-- HE WAS TRAPPED?

I THINK HE WAS TRAPPED, DR. BROWN...BY THE ONLY PRISON A MAN CAN NEVER ESCAPE...

...A GUILTY HEART.

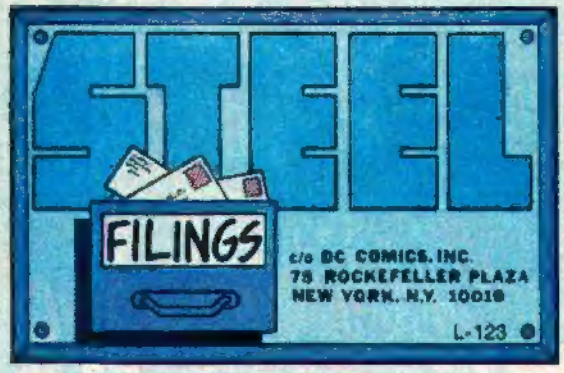
END

NEXT: ANOTHER FULL LENGTH STEEL SPECTACULAR AS THE INDESTRUCTIBLE MAN LEADS A RAID ON BERLIN ONLY TO DISCOVER--

THE SECRET ORIGIN OF

BARON BLITZKRIEG!

NEXT ISSUE ON SALE DURING THE LAST WEEK IN SEPTEMBER



Dear Al and Gerry:

When I saw the awful cover to *STEEL* #2, I jumped to the conclusion that *STEEL* had settled into the second issue slump that most short-run titles never pull out of. Lucky for you guys (and for me, too), the inside was *much* better than its outward promise.

For one thing, you guys created a *new* super-villain who wasn't dull! And these days, that's rare; they're all too often faint Xeroxes of old Marvel bad guys. But Mineral Master had power, he was convincing, and his motivation tied in with Gerry's expressed purpose for writing the series, that of inspecting the motivation of pre-war America. Mineral Master's costume was awful, but he was still one of the better super-villains created in the past few years.

It's really a shame you didn't call *STEEL* the "Super Soldier" after all; Don Heck's plainclothes action is much better than his super-heroics (and the script doesn't seem to favor them either). I don't care for his monsters at all, which is probably why I didn't like his cover. Still, I got a real kick out of the job he did this issue; I guess Colletta's inks got him more into the super-hero spirit.

All in all, I'd say *STEEL* is the best work coming out right now from both Conway and Heck. These guys obviously like their job, and so do I!

Beppe Sabatini
515 Division St.
E. Lansing, MI 48823

And we're glad to hear it, Beppe. We're also glad that our creative team managed to avoid both the "second issue slump" and a dull super-villain. Hopefully, we can also leap the most fearsome hurdle mentioned in your letter—that of being "a short-run title". Everyone connected with STEEL *is doing their best to see that Hank Heywood and Company live up to every bit of their potential, and we're counting on you readers to let us know if we hit the mark, or the drink.—MWB*

Dear Editor:

Basically, I don't care much for WWII stories, and lately there have been so many of them that the whole idea is wearing very, very thin.

But I kinda like the *STEEL* stories anyway, maybe because his exploits are actually set before our official entry into the war. As a one-time history student, I know some of the actual circumstances of that odd time when America was torn over whether we should get involved in Europe's "problems" or not. Hank Heywood happens to be one of the clear-sighted people who knows sooner or later the problem will be ours as well as Europe's. And with his super-powers, he is in a position to do something about his convictions. There are many interesting possibilities here and I look forward to see Gerry exploring some of them. There is one plot line I don't think I'm going to like—the problem started at the end of issue 2: Hank says that he'll have to choose between Gloria and his Steel identity. I hope it doesn't come to that; almost every hero under the sun has the same problem. But aside from this beef, I basically like what I've seen so far, so let's see more, huh?

Larry W. Cummings
1024 W. 3rd St.
Oil City, Pa. 16301

It's a deal, Larry, you keep buying STEEL *(you and a few hundred thousand other fans, that is), and we'll be happy to let you see as many stories about him as you want. Thanks for the kind words on Hank's characterization, but in all fairness, it's rather easy to create a "clear-sighted" hero over thirty years after WWII has been over. The most interesting thing about Hank's attitude seems to be the people it brings him in contact with—and this seems to be popular thing about him as well.—MWB*

Dear Editor:

STEEL's one major flaw preventing him from having believable characterization is his dogmatic views about the necessity of the U.S. entering the Second World War. If Steel could recognize the valid points of the anti-war movements and then point out flaws in their opinions, he would be more convincing.

Steven Shoyer
1480 Gunpower Rd.
Rydal, PA. 19046

Dear Editor:

This is going to be short.

A conservative super-hero? Far out! Thanks for *STEEL*.

Joseph Lanco
Albany, N.Y. 12206

And so it goes, with Steve Shoyer berating Steel's "dogmatism," and Joe Lanco applauding his "conservatism." We can't help but wonder, though, if the terms "conservative" and "liberal" meant as little back in the pre-WWII era as they do now. Might a "liberal" back then have referred to a person advocating entry into WWII, just as it came to mean one who abhorred foreign military entanglements three decades later? And if so, maybe Hank Heywood is neither "conservative" nor "liberal", but simply a man of conscience concerned with the future of liberty on a world-wide scale. Let us know what you think, and be here for the next issue of STEEL, THE INDESTRUCTIBLE MAN.

—Mike W. Barr

COMING THIS SUMMER!! THE DC EXPLOSION! AIR WAVE